The Development of English Prose with Special Reference to Ornamentation

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Development of English prose.

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With Special Reference to Ornamentation.

English prose is an ocean current. In its beginnings, it was small and insignificant; none of the myriad life that moved therein dreamed of the importance which attached to it or of the noble flood it was to become. Gradually it broadened and deepened, sweeping far away from its broken source to encircle distant islands and to warm them into blooming fertility; until at length all eyes have turned from the wide expanse of passive ocean and centered upon this massive and tumultuous stream. He who embarks upon the study of this prose is in danger of being so carried along by its power that he pays small heed to the source ~~from~~ whence it came, to the diffluent and affluent currents, or even to the grand changes of direction.

The study of literature is usually carried on with but a single object, to discover what has been written. Perhaps it is because this is the first thing to be done, the essential foundation for all knowledge, that its importance has been so highly magnified. It is necessary before progress can be made to acquaint one's self with all that has been accomplished in the chosen field; it is necessary to place one's self as nearly as possible in line with the foremost investigators

before advancing into the future. It is not enough merely to understand present facts and conditions. It is necessary to discover how the conditions arose and in what manner the facts may be correlated. Thus in the study of English prose, the very beginnings are the most important; and it is very doubtful if a correct appreciation of English literature can be obtained without a knowledge not only of its beginnings but also of the earliest development of any literature.

But a higher object lies behind the mere study of the has-been. It is to discover our destination. If certain tendencies have consistently shown themselves in the past, it may be assumed they will continue to appear. If the stream is now at flood moving with tremendous rapidity, one may safely assert that many leagues are yet to be traversed before the momentum can die away. Is this broad current of English prose to be swallowed up in some mighty Maelstrom, or is it to find a wider region and be absorbed in a broad ocean of the future?

Study must be carried on from two points of view. If possible the relation of each individual to his own time must be discovered, and next his work compared with that of his contemporaries. When this

is done but half is done. Each man or some representative man should be compared with the exponent of each other period, the points of likeness and of difference marked, and the amount and direction of change carefully noticed.

As the woodman in clearing a forest first removes the underbrush, so is it necessary to remove the merely verbal differences between respective epochs. Such expressions as "unto" for "to", vert constructions in "th" and "st", and the use of the auxiliary "do" for emphasis are to be quite ignored in tracing the course of prose. They are mere mannerisms discarded along with the periwig and the gaiter. To be sure they were good English and entitled to recognition; but since their disuse has been brought about rather by good taste than by natural development, they mark no essential tendencies.

Critics of a past age have a two-fold task. First, to discover the defects and the excellencies — the peculiarities — of each individual writer and how he was separated by his personality from the current of the period; and second, to expose and examine the characteristics of the age, the fundamental tendencies common to all writers. Men of talent living contemporaneously differ in ability and in cast of thought. They have tricks

of speech and inborn prejudices; but they grow in a common ground. By measuring these men, comparing one with another and pruning off personal peculiarities, we may arrive at some idea of the soil from which they sprang.

It is very probable that the tone of an epoch can better be ascertained through the study of inferior writers than through the study of masters. The humbler foliage clings close to earth; the giant Shakesperian oak lifts its top so far above its brothers that it may look at once through all the pathways of the past and all the endless vistas of the future. An error denoting superficial observation is to refer the making of an epoch to the great men who lived therein. It is equally as erroneous to give to the epoch all the credit of producing the great men. It is the fortuitous conjunction of favorable circumstances and vast intellects that produce Caesars and Napoleons. Students are peculiarly prone to lose sight of individual, to note only philosophic tendencies, to conclude that great men are produced by inexorable law and that epochs would have been the same without the genius. Without the epoch there would have been no great man; without the great man the epoch would have been vastly different. But since the influence of

the genius upon his age is accurately reflected in the plodding writer, and since, too, humble mediocrity embodies the spirit of his age divested of the blinding glory with which the genius surrounds it, a student can more clearly perceive basic tendencies in him than in men infinitely his superior. The earth is the same; but one may study a clod far more easily than a mountain.

The natural course of prose development would seem to be the one taken by the earliest literatures. Later literatures would be more or less perfect copies of the old. If there were great writers in the ancient era, their example would naturally attract imitators. The influences then that should tend to make two literatures similar are, the natural order of succession, the prestige of great and accepted authors, and the innate dislike of mankind to innovations. The opposite tendencies, those producing differences in nature of work, are, changed habits and environment, difference in language and idiom, and the despair of equalling predecessors. It is appalling the gloom that a great man may cast upon posterity. If some one should attempt to rival him in the same field, he is called an imitator; if he opens a new territory, he is branded as a seeker for flashy notoriety. Each succeeding great man blocks the way in one more

direction, and in time we shall be surrounded, hemmed in, tossed back from Tennyson to Homer and from Bacon to Aristotle.

The two tendencies of literature, toward the repetition of the old and toward the introduction of the new, may alternate in force. In English poetry they did alternate. Each was victorious for a time and ruled the empire not to the exclusion but to the great subordination of its rival. In time a compromise has been arranged, and each are recognized as component parts, as equal and perhaps hostile forces. The complete amalgamation of the two is hardly yet accomplished. In prose on the contrary the two forces have ever been nearly equal in power. Except for a disease in the time of Elizabeth where the classical grew rankly, the two have flourished and intertwined on common ground. Their union is now complete and final; they are one single plant, and its name is not Anglo-Saxon style nor Latin style, but simply English.

In Greece and Rome poetry preceded prose in its rise and developed steadily into better and better form. The brilliant course of Greek prose was cut short by the conquest of the the country, but one may assume it would have taken the bent its protogé of Rome actually took. Latin prose after years

of slow growth, suddenly blossomed into full vigor and beauty in the time of Caesar, one short generation before Latin poetry reached its height. The Latin of Cicero, Livy, Sallust, and above all of Caesar himself was never after equalled by Roman authors in beauty and simplicity. In its simplicity lay its beauty. Figures were in abundance, but they served to illustrate the context, not by their conceits to ornament the diction.

After this generation had passed away, however, there arose a class of writers whose first object was to please, to surprise, to dazzle the reader by the magnificence of their language. What they said was of less moment than how they said it. Long arrays of sentences accumbalanced, strange and complex verbal forms, and galleries of images distorted and unnatural, — these were the tricks that the Romans of the silver age relied upon to attract notoriety. This Silver Latin, the over ornamented, descended into the Spanish and thence centuries later into the English where it well-nigh revolutionized the prose of that country.

Without ornament, however, literature is nothing, only catalogues and dictionaries are produced. By ornament is not meant fanciful turns of expression, not always imagery The simplest and most literal manner of saying a thing may be the most effective

method of adorning it. By ornamentation is meant any device which lends to a production an attraction not inherent in the subject.

Since this is usually accomplished by means of imagery, it may be well to define psychologically, if possible, the relation of figures to plain statement. Take, for instance, a forcible figure from Thomas Fuller, "Some grounds .... frowned with thorns." There are plainly four separate centers of intelligence here, four concepts, to speak technically, — grounds, thorns, frown, and lastly personality, or life, call it what you will. The plain statement is a linking together of those two concepts between which a relation is to be pointed out, in this case, "Some grounds were thorny." But this is done not by passing directly from one to another, but by first introducing and interposing a third concept, frown. "Some grounds frowned", and here the essence of the figures comes in. The concept "frown" has in the mind heretofore been associated with a fourth concept, that of personality, the displeased human face probably. When the concept "frown" is excited, the fourth concept is immediately awakened. It at once supersedes the first concept, ground, in importance, because the unexpectedness of its appearance invests it with intense interest;

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and the sentence is concluded, "with thorns", while the fourth concept occupies the seat of honor. By this means a distinct relation is established between the four concepts, only three of which are directly stated, the fourth, excited by sympathy, or in simpler language, by the imagination, being the most important.

But it may be objected that if the statement had been, "Some grounds were made disagreeable by thorns as the human face is by frowns," it would still be figurative. It is true. The four concepts are present as formerly, but the process of unification between "thorns" and "frowns" and between "grounds" and "personality" is assisted by a deliberate push. The result is that the unification is completed with ease, each of the four concepts losing greatly in force and distinctness. The connection is nevertheless unusual and unexpected, and the difference, therefore, in the two methods of expressing the thought is not essential. A figure, then, is the establishment of a true connection between concepts not habitually associated.

Certain figures are natural, others appear even to the most unobservant reader as strained or distorted. What is the difference, psychologically, between the strained figure and the natural? Once more let us take an example. Robert Greene, in speaking of a

jealous man at a feast, says, "Thus eats poor Menaphon keeping his teeth guarders of his stomach." The concepts here are no less than seven; Menaphon; teeth, literally; teeth, signifying will; guard, meaning to assist; guard, meaning to repress; stomach, literally; stomach, as a symbol of anger. The two literal connections made are between teeth and stomach and between will and anger. These two sets of concepts are not usually associated in the mind, and no stepping stone is provided by which we may pass from one to the other. Therefore, we do not readily grasp the meaning. We must stop, make a conscious effort, remember that the stomach was once held to be the seat of anger, and by this bridge arrive at the full meaning of the figure. The strain is not in forcing a connection of remote concepts, but in establishing communion among concepts two or more of which are not directly suggested. To this class belong all so-called far-fetched figures, puns, conceits, and sharp turns of expression

Art may clothe this deformity in such a manner that it passes almost unnoticed.

"And Antony,
Enthron'd i' the market place, did sit alone,
Whistling to the air; which, but for vacancy,
Had gone to gaze on Cleopatra too
And made a gap in nature."

LiK. I P. 551.

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In this the use of the literal and the sudden personification of it (air) arouses two concepts with but one direct statement; others, the form, the emotions of Air, its conception of human beauty, all follow without direct statement, and the reader is obliged to leap rather than step from one concept to another. Yet, through the skill of the writer, the strain in the figure is scarcely noticeable; perhaps no one, however, can escape a shiver at its extravagance.

Extravagance is the most common of the weapons used by early writers to ornament their diction. Not that they meant their treatment to be extravagant, but that this was the error into which they most readily fell. Behind extravagance lies a fundamental principle of the human mind about which there is no reasoning the why or the wherefore, that only so much is pleasing as enables the full essence to be apprehended. A little of almost anything, let it affect what faculty it may, is pleasing. Even the foulest odor ceases to be offensive when reduced to its minimum minute particles. The mind revolts at tracing out in detail a process already understood. Any mode of expression, then, which imparts directly what the understanding has beyond doubt anticipated is extravagant. It is not verbosity, for no more words may have been employed than were necessary to express the idea, the idea itself was superfluous.

As an illustration, take the following extract from Bacon's essay on "The True Greatness of a State." He has undertaken to prove that wealth is a benefit to the state under certain conditions, the first of which is, that it be joined to warlike instincts. Says he,

"It is a thing that cannot be denied, that in equality of valour the better purse is an advantage. For like as in wrestling betwixt man and man, if there be a great overmatch in strength, it is to little purpose though one have the better breath;—"

Already few can have failed to grasp his full meaning. At this point we all say, "What an apt figure!" If Bacon had stopped, his figure would have been perfect and in the modern style. But he goes on.

"But if the strength be near equal, then he that is short winded will, if the wager consists of many falls, in the end have the worst;—"

No human being of average intellect can now be in the least doubt of the entire idea. It is as plain as sunlight. Anything farther is tautology; it is tedious, it is irksome in the highest degree to read farther upon this same idea, the utmost application of which has been fully seen.

"So it is in the wars, if it be a match betwixt a valiant people and a cowardly, the advantage of treasure will not serve; but if they be near in valour, then the better

moneyed state will be the better able to continue the war, and so in the end prevail."

And now the impatient mind has been for some time thinking, "Well, when he is through chewing this milk, I hope he will swallow it and so give on to something else." This illustrates the radical difference between early and modern figures; the former applies the figures in full, thus holding the mind into a clockwork amble; the latter leaves out all unessentials in the figure itself and all application of it, thereby spurring the mind into daring activity.

But the extravagance in the passage quoted from Shakspere is wholly different; it consists in the correlation of ideas one of which is unworthy the other. The air is one of the greatest manifestations of nature, and to think of it as interested in the beauty of a [redacted] woman is repugnant to common sense. Not only may figures thus be extravagant, but they may be so even when they are appropriate and when a new idea is added with each phrase if they be carried so far that the mind is surfeited. This also rests upon the principle that all beyond a bare sufficiency is repulsive. It is true when one figure is used with a number of applications, or when a number of figures are employed to enforce the same idea. In illustration of both forms I quote from Gosson.

"A thief is a shrewd member in a commonwealth, he empties our bags by force, these (players) ransack our purses by permission; he spoils us secretly, these rifle us openly; he gets the upper hand by blows, these by merry jests; he sucks our blood, these our manners; he wounds our body, these our soul;... he suffereth for his offences, these strut without punishment under our noses."

"We perceive not that trouble and toil draw us to life, ease and idleness bring destruction; that sorrow and anguish are virtuous books, pleasure and sport the devils baits; that honest recreation quickeneth the spirits, and plays are venemous arrows to the mind; that hunters deceive most when seeming to walk for their delight, they craftily fetch the deer about; that players counterfeiting a show to make us merry, shoot their nets to work our misery; that when comedy comes upon the stage, Cupid sets up a spring for woodcocks, which are entangled ere they descry the line, and caught before they mistrust the snare."

Another element of unpleasantness is extremely prominent in the extract just quoted. It is the balanced structure, balance of sentence, phrase, and even word. Perhaps there are no other forms of expression which lend such grace and effectiveness to diction as the balanced and the periodic when judiciously used, and no other forms are so liable to injudicious use.

What can be more charming than this sentence of B. R. [Translator of Herodotus] describing the effect upon Cyrus of the threats of his enemy? "These words, with Cyrus, came in at one ear and went out at the other, lighter in value than the wind in weight." What more urbane than Macbeths insincere speech?

"Here had we now our country's honor roof'd,
Were the graced presence of our Banquo present;
Who may I rather challenge for unkindness
Than pity for mischance."

Alliteration is another of the extravagances of ornament. It is a legitimate descendant of Anglo-Saxon tendencies, and it is far less frequently employed than might be expected. To show to what ends it was yet carried sometimes, this extract is inserted.

L. I. 393. "Our wrestling at armes is turned to wallowing in ladies' laps; our courage to cowardice; our running to riot; our bows into bolles, (bowls, for playing); and our darts to dishes.

Having defined terms, let us pass to a study of the periods of English prose, their defects, their virtues, and their peculiarities. And first let the statement be made that any separation into periods will be as arbitrary as the sub-division of species of insects. English prose is an unbroken cable around which much moss may have gathered, and from which many strands may hang; but its continuity is perfect. One may touch a

certain point and say, "This portion is vastly different from that of a century before," but he will be unable to point out the line of demarcation. For convenience' sake, let the prose be divided into five periods; 1. From the earliest (of true English authorship) to and through the Elizabethan age; 2. From that time until the middle of the 17th century; 3. From then until the close of the century; 4. Eighteenth century prose; 5. Nineteenth century prose, early and late.

The earliest attempts at literature in English were without the help of Latin models. But the Norman conquest of England stopped its development. When the language, after the anarchy of the next three centuries, once more settled into something like quiet, Latin words and idioms had become so much a part of the vernacular that they never lost their force. English became ever ready from that time until this to seize and appropriate a word of Latin origin; even the mere sound of the classic tongue was able to move the hearts of all cultured Englishmen. The ruggedness of spoken English was contrasted unfavorably with the delicate melody of the Sapphic meter or the noble swing of the stately hexameter. It remained for future time to show that English was (equally) as beautiful as it was powerful. But those who now sneer at early English authors for writing in Latin should remember that greater beauty in English was made

possible only through their appreciation of the classics and their introduction or the introduction through their influence of Latin words. What an advantage has English over all other tongues living or dead on account of its two-fold origin!

Early English prose, then, should show traces of Latin influence. But as the best Latin authors alone were studied by the cultured of England, we should expect the virtues of that language and not the vices, — or at least in a less degree, — to be the object of imitation.

This is actually the case. Not that Latin is always imitated, but that where it is imitated its virtues alone are the model. The distinctively Latin element is ever present, for the authors were classical students rather than English. They wrote in the vernacular for the avowed purpose of reaching a particular class of people; all that they wished to say well or hoped to make literature of they said in Latin. Their sentences were long and involved, their parts connected by childlike "ands" and "buts" and "sos", stuffed with all the associations any words might call up, sometimes balanced but not too often, seldom musical and then having only the accidental and rugged rythm that comes with deep feeling and vigorous thinking. Melody in a sentence as a thing to be sought for

in itself was unknown to them. Yet with all the length of the sentences, the thought is not obscured. By a different punctuation their productions, without changing the order of the words, may be rendered far less burdensome to the eye and more intelligible to the mind than much of the work of later writers. Why? The explanation lies in the fact that the men living in this early period were deep thinkers and put down their ideas, which in great minds are always clear, in homely words in the order used in conversation. They knew art only in Latin. They had not yet learned artifice. Therefore, while too many clauses encumber the sentence, each clause in itself is clear and potent.

The English element consisted in this use of homely words in the proper sequence, in the employment of English rather than classical idioms, in a slight probably unconscious tendency toward alliteration, and in fact to almost all of what may be called ornamentation. The form corresponding to the Latin ablative absolute is nearly (almost entire) wanting, and the final battle cry of the verb, coming upon the field after all its friends are down, is seldom heard. It usually bears the brunt of the fight along with its kindred.

The ornamentation is not in this period self conscious. Only such expressions are used as occur naturally to the writer. One can

scarcely imagine the early English author biting his quill and searching the ceiling for an appropriate simile. He is in a hurry, and if an idea does not present itself in a figurative form, it is set down with its baldness unrelieved. For this reason their figures acquire a homely force that sometimes startles the person who half asleep is poring over their now uninteresting pages.

"But death," says Fabyan, "that is to all persons equal, lastly took him in his dim dance." 114.

"I beheld the pretty fish wantonly darting with their red vermilion fins, and their sclales like the bright silver." 241.

"Far fetched colours of strange antiquity," says Wilson in a sentence of almost Shakesperian dignity. Farther on he says, "He that can catch an ink horn term by the tail, him they count to be a fine Englishman."

Simple and effective as these figures are, it cannot be denied that others may be found cumberome and awkward, that the balanced sentence is occasionally allowed to run to seed, and that synonyms in the fashion of the law are often incongruously heaped up. Nevertheless, they are not Latinisms in the sense that similar phenomena of later periods are Latinisms. That is, they are not imitations of Latin forms. They are English forms whose creation was caused by the thorough classic training of the writers. So deeply had

they become imbued with Cicero and Horace, their mother tongue had taken on as by second nature some of the characteristics of the Latin. They did not go deliberately to work, for they would have thought it unworthy of the trouble, to make for the vernacular idioms corresponding to Latin forms. Such expressions as the following must be referred, then, not to conscious imitation of Latin but to habits of thinking induced by long study of the classics.

Jn Cheke 259. "And as for you, we have surely just cause to lament you as brethren, and yet juster cause to rise against you as enemies, and most just cause to overthrow you as rebels."

Berners. 127. "What condign graces and thanks we ought to give to the writers of history, who with their great labours, have done so much profit to the human life; they shew, open, manifest, and declare to the reader, by example of old antiquity, what we should inquire, desire, and follow; and also what we should eschew, avoid and utterly fly; for when we see, behold, and read the ancient acts, gests, and deeds, how and with what labours, dangers, and perils they were gested and done &c. &c."

This balance and repetition was not yet studied, but one may easily see how prone the English language was to run to extremes. As the forms just given are forms foreign to English style, so the following are examples of idiom, humor, or alliteration for the most part native in their origin.

"And some said that when Constantine was
s. Moore. gotten away (from the stocks), I was fallen for
176 anger in a wonderful rage. But surely, though
I would not have suffered him to go, if it
would have pleased him to have tarried still in the
stocks, yet when he was neither so feeble for
lack of meat but that he was strong enough
to break the stocks, nor waxen so lame of his
legs with lying but that he was light enough
to leap the walls, ... neither was I .... so angry
with any man of mine that I spoke them any
evil word for the matter more than to my
porter that he should see the stocks mended, that
the prisoner stole not in again. For never will
I for my part be so unreasonable as to be angry
with any man that riseth if he can, when he"
findeth himself that he sitteth not at his ease.

"And thus were these two noble princes, born of
nshed most loyal blood, brought up in great wealth,
324. likely long to live, reign, and rule in the realm,
by traitorous tyranny taken, deprived of their estate,
shortly shut up in prison, and privily slain
and murdered."

These are the great phenomena of the period.
Individuals may have been superior to them, may
have contradicted in their work all the ~~x~~ conclusions
I have arrived at in this study; but the general
course seems to have been as pointed out. Cranmer
may have had the "silvery melody" of De Quincey,
Foxe may have been able to draw a graphic
portrait, Latimer may have used sentences remarkable

for their forceful brevity, Holinshed may have anticipated the future in his study of character rather than fact; yet for all this the tendency of the times was toward ruggedness, emptiness of outline, prolixity, and narrowness of view. Or rather the period was enveloped in this fog and striving somehow to emerge from it.

Only two of the efforts to accomplish that end amounted to anything in future time, and both are due to a new motive,— the desire to make literature of the English language. It led in the first instance to refinements of sound, to extremes of alliteration, to quaint and monotonous balance, to strained and unnatural figures, in short to all the extravagances in expression which might be thought an improvement upon bare statement. It led in the second instance to a more legitimate melody, a rythm that belonged to prose and not to verse, to careful attention to sentence structure upon English traditions, to increased prolixity and more logical connection of parts, and to disregard, finally, of Latin example.

As the former manifestation is the more prominent at first and seemed then to be the main channel of the divided current, it demands our first attention. John Lyly was the man who made the style popular, and from a character of his creation it takes its name. But Lyly did not invent the style. It was gradually growing in English before his time; and he only seized a golden opportunity. If his "Euphues"

had never been published, Euphuism probably would still have had its day; but on the other hand, common sense might have won the victory and Euphuism been but a slight malaria instead of a severe Typhoid.

Lyly obtained his ideas from the Spanish literature which had in turn inherited them from the Silver Latin, and added to them from Saracenic sources. And now is found the second stage in the imitation of a master, where the vices not the virtues are the model. Classical learning had spread, and to Caesar and Horace and Livy were added Martial, Statius, Lucan, and Columella. These as well as the Spanish were imitated, and the result was an English style as painful to read as it is foreign to native modes of thought.

Euphuism consisted in a neat and continued alliteration, in a delicate rythm each beat of which was repeated at least once, in figures whose selection was determined not by aptness but by supposed elegance, selected largely from objects in natural history, and in unfailing ~~balance~~ and accurate balance of one part against another. The balanced structure is the most prominent feature. It eclipsed Elizabethan common sense and cast a deep shadow over the prose literature of the day. The balance extended to every part however minute in the sentence, and, combined with the rythmical element, formed a mixture which does very well in small doses but which in continued treatment never fails to

occasion nausea. The figures were no longer spontaneous. Nature was ransacked for everything that might be twisted into a simile, and the more the searcher found the better he was pleased. He put them all in, and the idea thus became obscure in the swarm (of insects) that fed upon it.

Examine the following in detail. "Yea, but," says Greene in Pandosto, "conscience is a worm (balance) that ever biteth but never ceaseth. (balance of ever against never and biteth against ceaseth): that which is rubbed with the stone Galactitis will never be hot (fictitious figure): flesh dipped in the sea Aegeum will never be sweet (another fictitious figure balanced word for word against the first): the herb Trigion being once bit with an asp, never groweth (false figure): and conscience once stained with innocent blood, is always tied to a guilty remorse (innocent blood balanced against guilty remorse, the whole against the herb Trigion, and with it against the first two measures)." This is by no means the worst specimen that could be found, but it is sufficient to illustrate the extravagance of Euphuism. Ornamentation is used for its own dear sake, and ideas are subordinated.

To call these figures false is misleading. The balanced is false with these figures.

But Euphuism is not altogether bad. The constant study to say elegantly what was to be said could not but result sometimes in well turned phrases. Indeed, isolated specimens

except of the extreme type do not sound badly; their constant repetition of them is the distressing feature. For instance, this sentence from Gosson though rigidly Euphuistic and not at all a model of style, is yet rather pleasing than otherwise when separated from its context.

394. "If this were as well noted as ill seen, or as openly punished as secretly practiced, I have no doubt but the cause would be seared to dry up the effect, and these pretty rabbits very cunningly ferreted from their burrows."

And in this from Greene, where deep feeling justifies rythm, Euphuistic excesses rise into pathos.

558. "And shalt thou, sweet Babe, be committed to Fortune, when thou art already spited by fortune? Shall the seas be thy harbour, and the hard boat thy cradle? Shall thy tender mouth, instead of sweet kisses, be nipped with bitter storms? Shalt thou have the whistling winds for thy lullaby, and the salt sea foam instead of sweet milk?"

Lyly was the exponent, Puttenham the elucidator of verbal pyrotechnics. Besides these two, the invasion conquered completely a large number of the best English writers. Gosson, Lodge, Greene, Hayward surrendered unconditionally to the fashion. Bacon, Sydney, Shakspere, Decker, Donne, these and many others were half persuaded. Their prose work more than

smacks of artificiality. In some places it is without doubt Euphuistic; in other portion it is not. Few authors of the day did not sometimes yield to the spell even though they despised (most) its absurdities. It was probably the most potent "fad" that ever convulsed the English language.

Strange to say, its influence upon later times was for the better. The very force of the rythm in particular cases was not lost upon a people who were seeking to make for their language a lasting literature. When common sense was applied to Euphuism it fell, but it left behind the better part of itself. The power of music in the language had been demonstrated, and English never sank again into the dry ash heap it once had been. A strength it always had had. Euphuism added to this a reserve power of melodious and intense expression to be used indeed only upon impassioned themes, but in those cases wonderfully effective.

The second of the periods into which English prose has been divided has no well defined beginning or end. It shows a growth in common sense throughout the 17th century and a change in the line of rythmical expression. The first sign of the period is the absence of the old childlikeness. The things of which they speak are no longer wonders to the writers, only to the audience they address. They have learned all that can be learned in classic Latin, and they

convey their knowledge as masters, not as co-workers. The desire to write English had sucked in one by one not only the humbler men, but also the higher, poets, historians, theologians. Even the philosophers showed signs of a ~~(sneaking)~~ regard for their native tongue. Gradually the old simplicity of structure gave place to an intricate and pedantic style, the loss in directness being more than compensated for in the added melody. The parts of the discourse were as closely united as the links in a coat of mail, and nothing was left out. Every thought was painfully elaborated, every figure was carefully chosen, wrought to perfection, and strained to its full power of application. Prolixity was carried beyond the outermost limits of good sense, and one must work his way slowly through the briers before he can grasp the stock of the idea. Latin in the first part of the period was the sole model. Men sought, ~~&~~ of deliberate purpose, to find in the vernacular equivalent forms for Cicero's polished sentences. Their motive, then, was different from that of their predecessors, but the results they obtained were often precisely similar.

The writers of the first part of this epoch were much less in favor than the Euphuists, and their progress was made under discouragement. Even the greatest of them swerved slightly from his path under the attraction of the mighty Euphuism, and modern times owe a deep debt to those few writers who preserved steadfastly the purity of the language. Their self-

consciousness is the most prominent characteristic. When English was first written, it was without any idea on the part of the writers that it would ever become literature. Hence it was unstudied, lacking like conversation in continuity, having sudden inconsistencies in thought, and in spite of this possessing a sturdy vigor. When later students saw that even these rough beginnings were of considerable merit, they set to work to fix a standard for the vernacular. Euphuism, as has been stated, was one result of this, it seeking by a direct revolution to make of English a polished language. But the more cool headed, realizing that only slow growth results in permanent progress, began to lop off one by one the imperfections of their predecessors. This is the process that has been going on ever since.

When Euphuism had run its course, it united once more with the main current and aided thus in forming modern prose. Euphuism did not die as suddenly as it sprang up, it wasted away insensibly, and touches of it could long afterward be detected. The process of decay at first was hardly noticeable. Overbury says,
111. "He offereth courtesies, to show them, rather than himself, humble." Lyly would have said "to show them humble, rather than himself meek." Later on extravagance in form began to wear away before extravagance in meaning. Says Ar-
310. gyle: "That generous and worthy knight, the author's father, having been unparalleledly

wronged (a Latin ablative absolute) by false wicked and covetous men, himself being of all men living the justest, equallest and most honest in his dealings ...."

By the time of Walton's writings, 1653, Euphuism was a fire under control. It had sunk to so subordinate a place that it no longer troubled the scholar, but the tendency was not yet obliterated. It exerted a strong influence upon the later prose of the 17th century, increasing and making regular its melody. Whenever deep feeling appeared, even in theology which had always been but little under the spell of Euphuism, the balanced sentence and the subtle alliteration was called into service to render the passion effective.

It has just been stated that in theology Euphuism was least ~~apparent~~ to be found. This, of course, is because sermons were composed primarily to be spoken, and in speech the absurdities of Euphuism are most apparent. The tendency toward minute application and amplification is naturally most prominent here. Hales is not content with saying that truth is more ancient than error, for error is nothing but deviation and swerving from the truth; he goes on to say, "there not truth therefore
189. first, there could be no error, since there could be no swerving from that which is not."

Hales, however, is hardly a representative theologian of that age. He published nothing,

and was not ambitious of becoming a power in literature. Hall or Chillingworth are more characteristic. Their long-winded and uninteresting sermons, their bitter and often powerful controversial papers, and their patience and faith in a position once taken up, all are qualities pertaining to the age. They differ from Latimer and earlier divines in their want of fiery vigor, of the rugged and often vulgar idiom, and in their power over polished and courteous phrases, over logical sequence and subtle melody.

"Even Jeremy Taylor, the greatest of them, was author of no such stinging sentences as
Latimer. these. "Then, say I, if thou wilt not make
233-4. restitution, thou shalt go to the devil for it. Now choose thee either restitution, or else endless damnation..... Alack, alack; make restitution; for God's sake make restitution; ye will cough in hell else, that all the devils there will laugh at your coughing. There is no remedy, but restitution open or secret; or else hell." "He delights rather in such expressions as these"..... And
534 a wise man in the variety of chances, like the nave or center of a wheel in the midst of all the circumvolutions and changes of posture without violence or change, save that it turns gently in compliance with its changed parts, and is indifferent which part is up and which is down." "It may be he
537. went yesterday to a wedding, merry and brisk,

and there he felt his sentence, that he must return home and die; nor feared that then the angel was to strike his stroke, till his knees kissed the earth, and his head trembled with the weight of the rod which God put into the hand of an exterminating angel."

In history, analysis of character gradually took the place of bare statement of fact. The study of motives and causes that resulted in events was yet almost unknown, but Clarendon was a master in the analysis of the persons of whom he spoke. The closer introspection of the age produced a free thinking Hobbes and a broad minded Cudworth; but no philosophy can explain the appearance in this period of an impassioned dreamer like Drummond. Even Sir Thomas Browne seems the product not of his own but of a later age. And when L'Estrange, the first journalist, is reached the transition, or rather the development into the third period is well advanced.

And yet what is this third period and all succeeding periods but a continuation of the same tendencies? It is only that in each one, a sufficient progress has been made to warrant a separate treatment. Yet in this period an undercurrent may possibly be perceived that might have proved disastrous to literature. It is a scattering, a divergence of ideals, not a divergence due to dissimilar individual tastes, but due to a lack of a definite aim or of a final authority which might determine what was and

what was not worthy. Perhaps the cause lies in the fact that education was as yet confined to classic principles. Locke said, "If any one among us have a facility or purity more than ordinary in his mother tongue, it is owing to chance, or his genius, or anything, rather than to his education, or any care of his teacher." Left thus to grope blindly about, the authors in the previous period showed strong individual distinctions, in this period, gave indications of parting company altogether. What could be more widely separated than the styles of Dryden, of Temple, and of Algernon Sidney; or of Pepys and John Bunyan? They seem hardly to have belonged to the same race.

194.

Yet the danger was concealed, and later on, when Swift and Addison appeared, a new danger was impending. It was that the language might lose its life in its struggle to be regular. To be sure there is no vigor like Swift's and no grace superior to Addison's; but when these men were gone, if their principles should prevail without the infusion of their personality, English prose would be a level but barren plain.

As it was, ornamentation sank before the one idea, simplicity. Balanced sentence, alliteration, extravagance, well nigh disappeared, even figures grew scarce. It seemed that the language was approaching a desert. Defoe wrote page after page wherein not a flower bloomed

It was vigorous certainly. "Justice is always
369. violence to the party offending." But his
charm was in the ease of the journey, not
in the beauty of the scenery. Of course this
scarcity of figures lent to them, when they
did come, an added significance. And it
must be admitted that these figures were al-
ways appropriate, straight-forward, and under
wise restraint.

295 "Show the muscles of their passion," says Rymer.
78. "I found myself as in a miry bog that
shook if I did but stir," Bunyan.
215. "She [Truth]," says Halifax, "may be kept
under and suppressed, but her dignity still
remains with her even when she is in chains....
She has lived very retired indeed, nay, sometimes
so buried, that only some few of the discerning
parts of mankind could have a glimpse of
her; with all that, she has eternity in her,
she knows not how to die, and from the darkest
clouds that shade and cover her, she breaks
from time to time with triumph for her
friends, and terror to her enemies."

The old style ornamentation still lingered,
but lingered in obscurity. Dryden, who stands
as the first writer of true modern English prose,
did not disdain the courtly balance. "In fine,
156. let us allow, that he had so much fancy, as
when he pleased he could write wit; but that
he wanted so much judgement, as seldom to
have written humour, or described a pleasant folly."

Algernon Sidney shows traces of the Latin. "As
50. the meanest piece of wood and stone, being
placed by a wise architect, conduces to the ~~glory~~
beauty of the most glorious building."

But on the whole regularity made such strides that it seemed all powerful. A regulator for regularity was needed, and in the fourth period, the 18th century, this prophet rose. His name was Johnson. Johnson's ability was not so transcendent, but his personality was so overpowering that he became the sole and final authority in all matters pertaining to letters. This was what the language required. The dangers were now avoided. The carelessness and triviality of Pepys, the stiltedness of Bunyan, the timidity of Temple were all subordinated by his example as well as command to the profundity and rythm of Dryden or Tillotson, and to the simplicity of Addison and Swift. And yet this simplicity which might result in baldness, was not altogether sanctioned. Johnson believed in regularity, and he did perhaps more than any other man to bring the language under due control, yet a regularity that tended toward desolation he condemned. He even sought to infuse a life and color into English by going back to Euphuism. Was it John Lyly in 1590 who said these things?—

145. "Without good humour, learning and bravery can only confer that superiority which

swells the heart of the lion in the desert, where he roars without reply, and ravages without resistance."

147. "I have a wife whose beauty first subdued me, and whose wit confirmed her conquest, but whose beauty now serves no other purpose than to entitle her to tyranny, and whose wit is only used to justify perverseness."

149. "Whoever thinks it necessary to regulate his conversation by antiquated rules, will be rather despised for his futility than caressed for his politeness."

159. "These parallels, therefore, have more of genius but less of truth; they often please but they never convince."

This is (Sam) Johnson writing in 1751. But he did not carry the ~~form~~ practice to a dangerous extent, his use of it was judicious and beneficial, and he interspersed with it different forms, sentences of remarkable brevity and force, sentences too of elephantine length and weight, by which he is chiefly remembered, sentences of the python's sinuosity, and sentences of flushed and honest dignity. By thus gathering and attaching to his single person all the flying strands of English style he pointed to, even if he failed to embody, a fixed ideal for all English writers.

Johnson was so clearly the 18th century that it is difficult to treat of anyone but him. Yet he, with almost all his contemporaries

both in prose and poetry, lacked one thing, a heart. Gibbon, Berkeley, Robertson, Hume, flowed grandly on with nothing to break the continuity of their perfect art. Adam Smith and Bentham and Chesterfield are all great names in literature, but they were cold spectators of what they described, not participators therein. The great novelists necessarily put more of themselves into their work, and yet it was not a real personality. It was either, as with Richardson, what they would wish to be, or, as with Fielding and Smollet, only that portion which was in their opinion entertaining. But there was one great writer who felt all that he said and concealed none of his feelings. It was Burke. No other work of the century can show such depth of dignified pathos as is in Burke's reply to the Duke of Bedford. He is speaking of the death of his son.

416 "Had it pleased God to continue to me the hopes of succession, I should have been, according to my mediocrity .... a sort of founder of a family .... But a Disposer whose power we are little able to resist, and whose wisdom it behooves us not at all to dispute, has ordained it in another manner, and (whatever my querulous weakness might suggest) a far better. The storm has gone over me; and I lie like one of those old oaks which the late hurricane has scattered about me .... There, and

prostrate there, I most unfeignedly recognize the Divine justice, and in some degree submit to it.... I am alone. I have none to meet my enemies in the gate.... They who ought to have succeeded me have gone before ... I owe to the dearest relation (which ever must subsist in memory) that act of piety, which he would have performed to me; I owe it to him to show that he was not descended .... from an unworthy parent."

Picturesque as was Locke in the previous period and as were Reynolds and Burke in this, the tendency in ornamentation was still downward. If the great names be omitted, among the rest fewer genuine figurative expressions are to be found, I venture, than in any series of writers in any other age whatsoever. Even in the greater writers, figures are by no means abundant, but when they do appear, they are perfect."

470 "The luxury of Antioch trembled," says Gibbon.

23. "Controversy," says Conyers Middleton, "to truth is like a gentle wind to trees; it shakes the head but fastens the root."

Toward the close of the century a feeling of impatience toward all restraint, especially the classical, grew up. In poetry the movement was extremely strong because there the blight of rules is most deadly and its curb most irksome. But in prose, instead

of overthrowing the laws so long established, the new element merely blew into the withered nostrils the breath of life. The old soil, re-fertilized, sent forth once more its wonderful vegetation in all its ~~old~~ youthful luxuriance. This period, then, was not so much a development as it was a revivification. The old ornaments were brought out and reburnished, but they were worn with a prudence and a good taste entirely foreign to their former wearers. As a result, the earlier portion of the 19th century can show literary productions to be compared only with the work of the Elizabethans. The two epochs are closely related in spirit, so closely that their branches may be said to interlace across the level roadway between; but the lawlessness of the earlier period is the result of ignorance of restraint rather than, as in the poetry of the later period, of defiance of it.

Isaac Disraeli was among the first to censure the old homage to classical. With fine contempt he remarked that Dennis, before
610. he ventured to be pleased, was compelled to consult Aristotle, but it was ever Aristotle explained by Dennis. Wordsworth in poetry principally and Coleridge for the most part in prose explained and exemplified the new movement. The impulse was found outside of England, theory in Germany, practice in France, but the country showed a literary development all its own. Prose became figurative and

romantic in the highest degree, yet it remained regular. The old framework was used, but it was filled in with multitudinous forms, with beauty with pathos with humor, with all the various emotions that vibrate in a quick and earnest people. Thereby effects were produced such as the old writers had never dreamed of. Hood, Scott, Jane Austen, De Quincey, Coleridge, all blazed and shone in a glory that put completely in darkness all but a few of their predecessors.

The heart, the life, the power of the writer to put himself in his work, these are the essentials of the early 19th century. "The mind that
498. lies fallow but a single day," says Addison. from the arctic circle of his heart, " sprouts up in follies that are only to be killed by a constant and assiduous culture." But Scott says,

"O, what a tangled web we weave,
When first we practice to deceive!"

The first quarter of the century was a period of revolution, but at length the rational desire for law and order gained the upper hand, and the early principles were combined, in such men as Tennyson, with a smoothness and melody never before reached. Prose shared in the tendency toward delicacy, and Matthew Arnold, for instance, showed a grace and ease and perhaps a tastelessness peculiar to the present century. A few men, as Ruskin, were similar in force to the old brutality of Latimer, others, as Lowell,

returned to the extreme figurative style of Elizabeth's age, but without either the excesses of the Euphuists or the pedantry of their rivals.

Whither, then, are we tending? We have seen the language arise, avoid numberless dangers, develop its every side, until at length it seems little can be added to the exquisite manner of expressing thought of which we have had so many examples. The literature of to-day greatly exceeds in quantity if not in quality that of any other age. The impetus is undiminished. Thus it was immediately preceding the Elizabethan age. But thus also it was in Greece after the final literary outburst. Are we to have a third great period, or is our empire over? Are two ages of genius and two only vouchsafed to each people? The answer is to be sought for not in the language itself, but in the forces moving among the masses.

In Greece, after her second glory, development had ceased. The people were apathetic, indifferent, the subordinates although the teachers of Rome. In Elizabeth's time, England was just beginning to take its place among the great nations of the globe. The French Revolution awakened the legions of liberty and thus called forth the Romantic era. What have we now? In all the five thousand years of authentic history, there has never been so great a change in the customs, conveniences,

industries, and daily life of the people as there has been in the last century. The industrial development is still going on, and a great literature demands that the moving forces be behind not before it. When there is a halt, as a halt there must be, then the fires of genius will blaze throughout the land; then poetry will spring up surpassing that of the Elizabethan age as much as our civilization surpasses theirs; then will prose be written, deeper, more earnest, more musical than any that has yet enlightened our planet. As the advance of all other ages is but an infant's step to the dizzying sweep of progress in the 19th century, so will the feeble efforts of the past be to the noble literature of the future.

How fortunate we are to live beneath the sun of the 19th century! The equality of man before the law has been taught. We preach the equality of all mankind, not simply of man. We preach of right to equal opportunities, we demand reward on the basis of effort, not of attainments, we ask the abolition instead of the punishment of crime, and we hope that the whole shall extend its deep sympathy and assistance even to the most humble individual as a worthy member of the brotherhood of the human race. Stern reality knows not these dreams; but the spirit of altruism and idealism ever marches onward, and we are nearer

now and are approaching more rapidly to our goal than ever before in earthly annals.

These forces are abroad in the land, but they have no voice. When will she who now but points in silence loose the bonds of her tongue and speak her message to the world? Perhaps three hundred years are yet to pass, perhaps but twenty, but speak she will at last, and then Milton will be third instead of second and Shakspere second instead of first. And when she speaks, her language will be that most perfect medium of expression known to the earth, that tongue which has spoken for the greatest variety of human investigators and philosophers, that tongue which lends itself so perfectly at once to the voice of deepest passion, to the most comprehensive reasoning, the most sublime ecstacy, the most delicate melody, to the simplest of plain statements or to the most gorgeous of rhetoric; she will speak through the lips of the Anglo-Saxons.

For convenience in my own study I made out the charts following. They may be of some interest to you as well as convenient for reference to time of authors alluded to in the paper.

Frank T. Whitzel

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